

The
Summer and Autumnal
Diseases
of the Western Country; -

An Inaugural Dissertation,

By Elisha Embree.

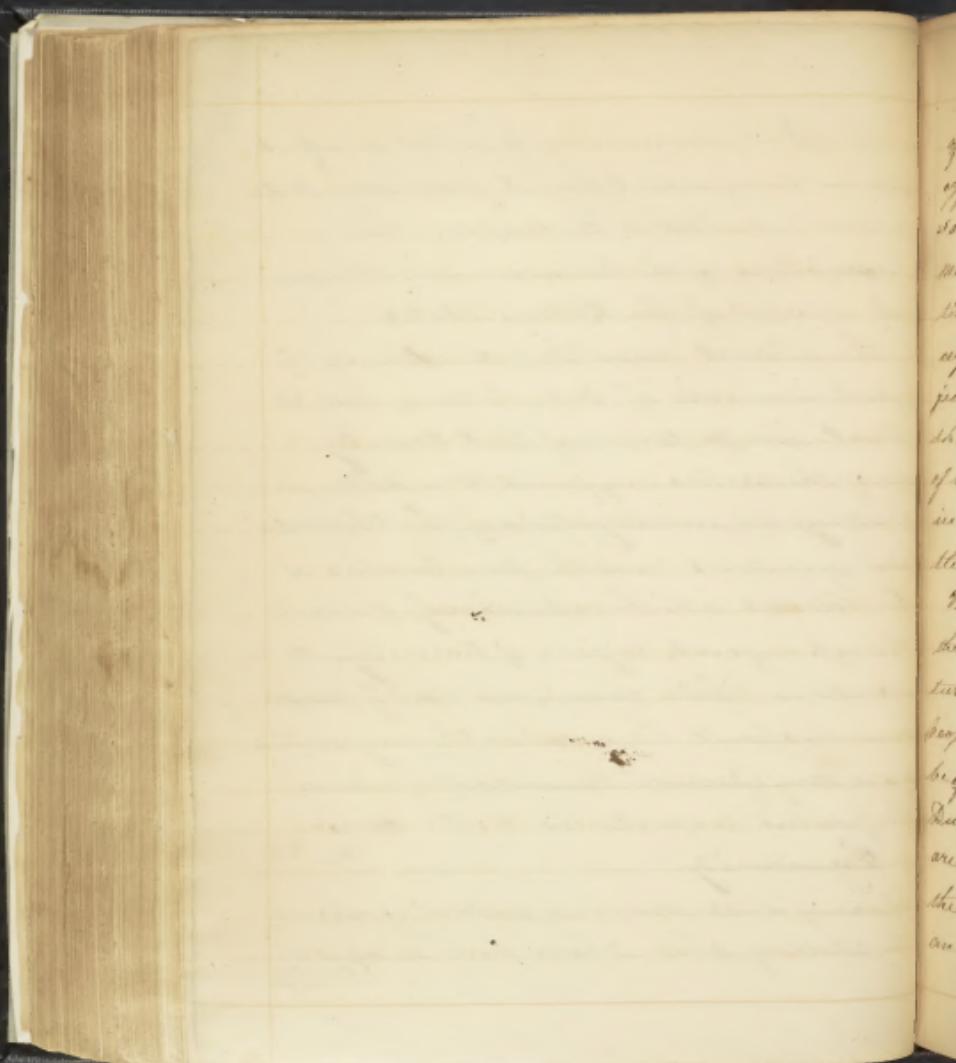
Philadelphia, 1823.

Passed March 29th 1823.

In endeavouring to select a subject for an Inaugural Essay, I find none that is more adapted to the purpose, than a Description of the Summer and Autumnal diseases of the Western States.

The almost insulated condition, the rapid increase of population, and political importance of that Country, are of themselves sufficient to render interesting, an investigation of the character and causes, and the peculiarities of the diseases which extensively prevail through a great portion of Country; to ascertain their causes, and apply proper remedies will be a valuable acquisition to our professional knowledge, and of the greatest importance to the cause of Humanity.

During a residence of several years in the State of Ohio, I have had an opportunity



of making many observations on the effect
of the prevailing Diseases, and have had
some practical experience in the treat-
ment and cure of them; although much more
time and a greater opportunity, would be ne-
cessary, to give a complete view of the sub-
ject. My object in this paper is merely to
sketch the nature, treatment and causes
of the Diseases which annually prevail
in a district of Country hitherto but lit-
tle noticed by Medical Authors.

Before entering into a further detail of
the subject, a few remarks on the na-
ture of the climate, the habits of the
people, and their ~~manner~~ of living, may
be of service.

During the winter months, the winds
are from the South West, passing from
the Rocky Mountains, they sweep over
an extensive portion of high flat, or

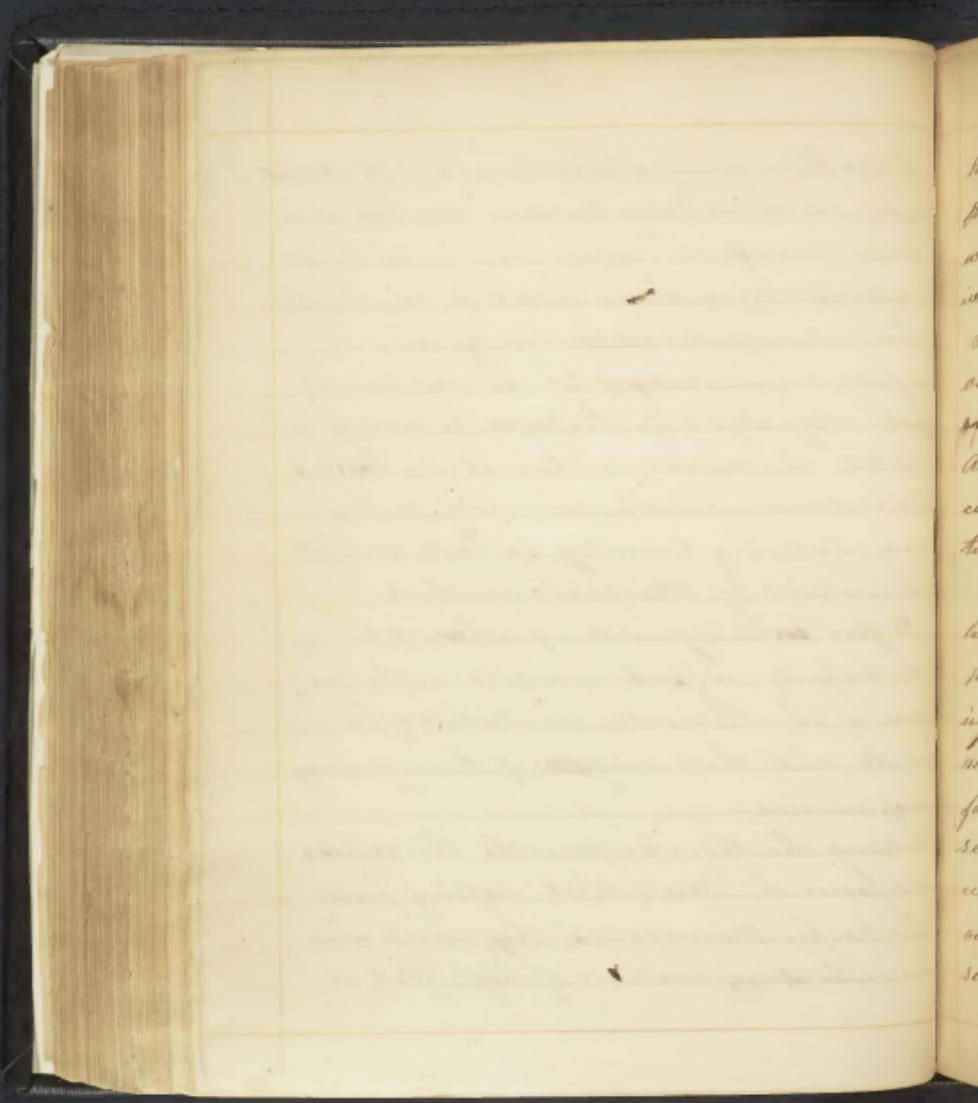
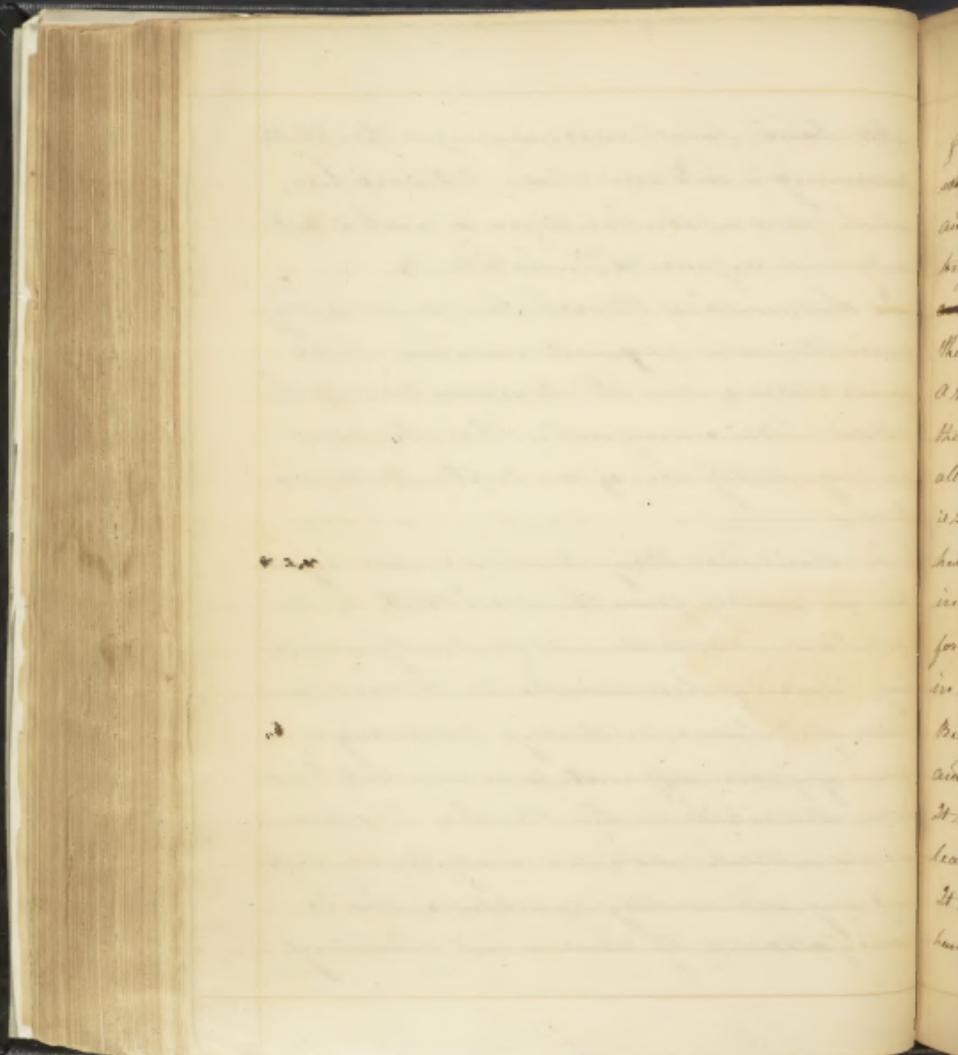


table land, sometimes varying to the North producing a cold and clear Atmosphere, which gives a peculiar degree of health activity and vigour to the inhabitants.

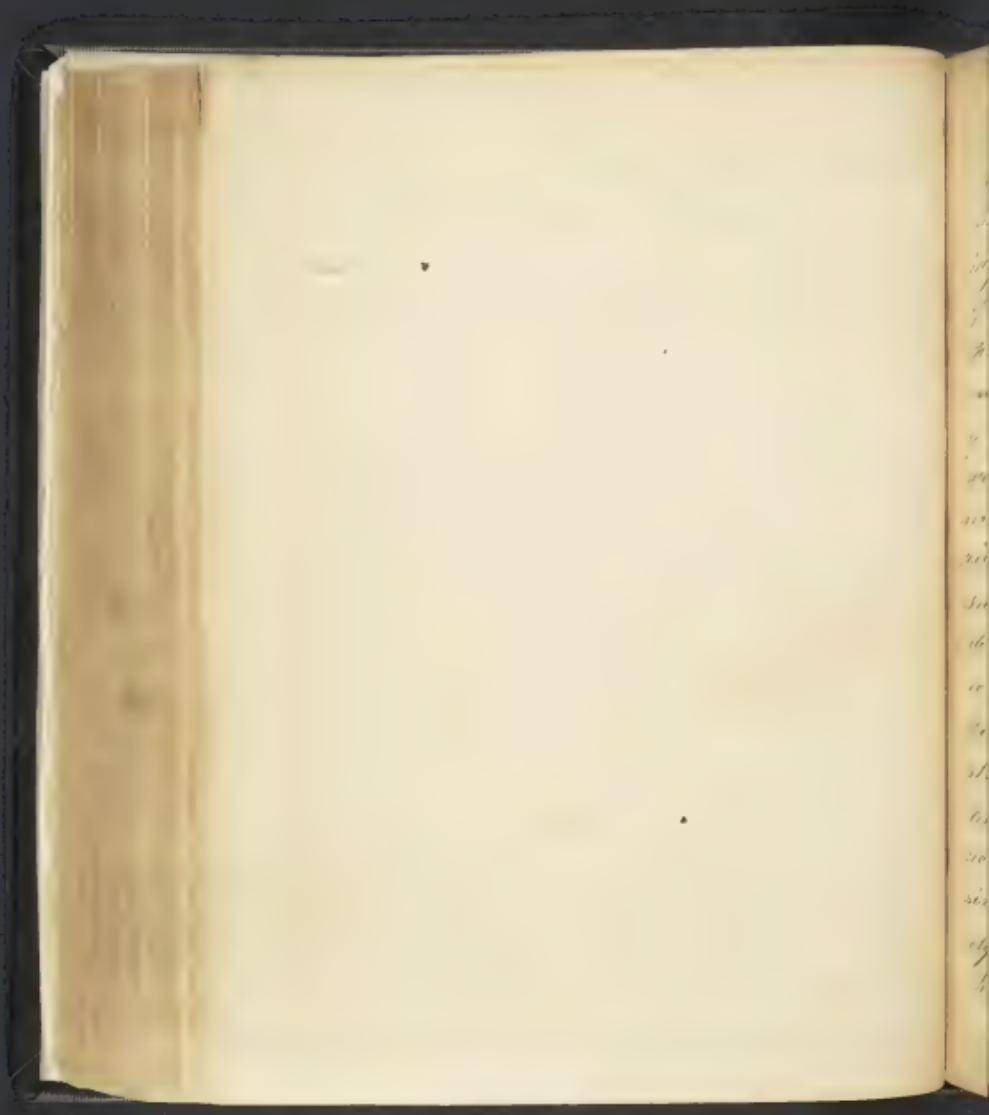
In the month of March the wind is very variable, with frequent rains and slight snow storms, and the temperature of the atmosphere unequal. The diseases consequently are of an inflammatory nature.

In April and May the wind is more regular, and mostly from the south West; the temperature moderate and gradually increasing. During these months the diseases assume more of bilious tendency, producing a form of fever different from any that I have seen described in the Books. It commences its attack, with an heavy chill without any premonitory symptoms, and is soon followed by nausea and vomiting.

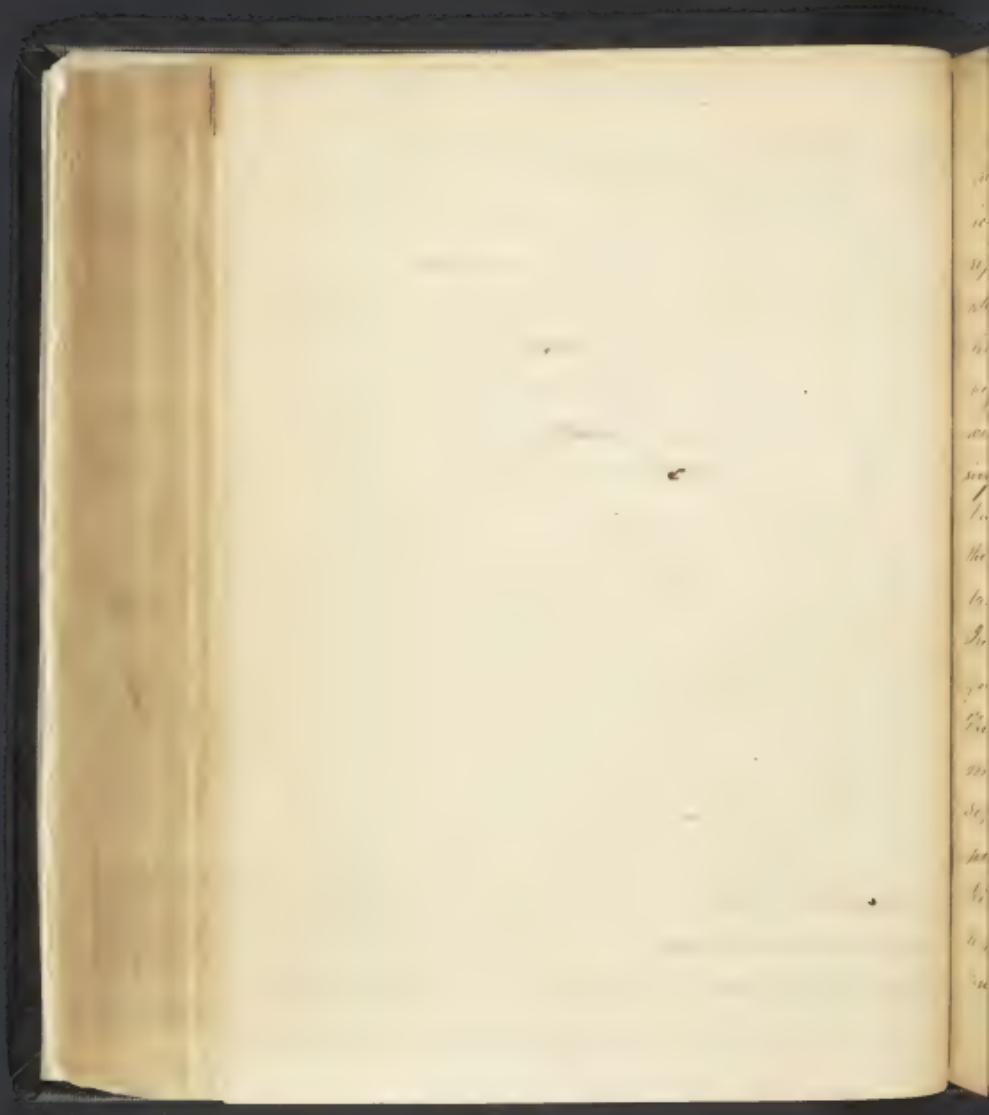


great pains in the Head, flushed countenance, with much anxiety. The pulse full strong and not frequent. The skin dry, and the tongue covered with a yellowish brown ~~at~~ coat, and the thirst not very great. The bowels either very constipated or very loose, a slight delirium generally prevails, and the patient is sometimes carried off with all the symptoms of apoplexy but this is seldom the case when active remedies have been used. It is different from ~~syphillis~~ in its mode of attack, and termination, for we very seldom find it terminating in the Typhus. — There is much greater Biliary derangement than in the ~~syphillis~~ and the System is not so generally affected. It has no regular remissions, and gradually leaves the patient in six or eight days. It is generally cured by the free use of the lancet and active purgatives.

In the month of June and July the rains
vary from south West to south East. The latter
followed by continued rains and violent
thunders, producing great floods in the small Rivers
and creeks. The rise of the larger Rivers
depend upon the swelling of the small creeks
water on the mountains, which generally is
in March or April, over flowing their
banks extensively, and now becoming a
useful source of revenue. The tempera-
ture of the air varies, in March increasing
in the evenings, gradually warming the
vegetation luxuriant and rapid in its
growth. The inflammatory nature of the
diseases increasing and the mortality of the
people increasing. Both Cholera and
small pox become epidemic in nearly all parts
of the country. In the latter part of July
Cholera Mortis in this country made their
appearance.

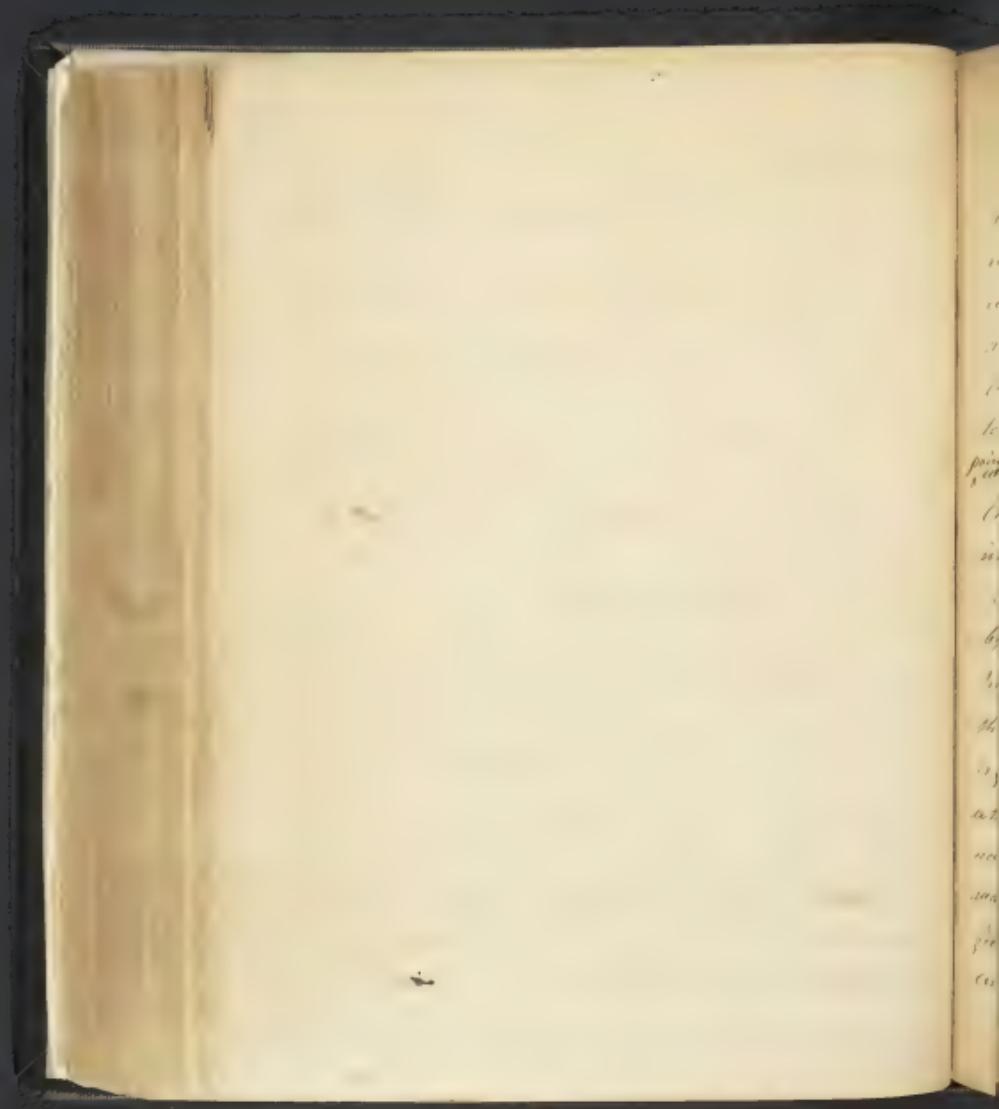


In August and September the vegetation
having reached its height, and fruits ripe
itly, are scattered by the intense heat
of the sun; the temperature of the air
there is at the height in July and August,
although the evenings of the latter are
genuinely cool and invigorating. The stems
are very heavy and the flags frequent
on lawns and in the vicinity of
rivers. Rain seldom appears excepting in
small showers attended with thunder
and lightning; the showers either be
over by evaporation before they descend
from their sources, the clouds and small
streams notwithstanding the nature of ground,
and the luxuriant crop of vegetables is
now undergoing a state of rapid decomposi-
tion, filling the atmosphere with a vari-
ety of exhalations. During this time
the winds prevail from the southwest



and South, coming from the Gulf of Mex-
ico, pouring up the great valley of the Missis-
sippi, sweeping over a large portion of
alluvial land, and extensive prairies,
clothed with the effluvia of decaying
vegetable, impregnating the atmosphere
with their various principles. These pas-
sing over an extensive flat, and uncul-
tivated forest, and originally meeting at
the fertile improvements of the 3. habi-
tants of the Northern States.

In the early part of August I determined
to visit the Academy, generally prevail-
ing, and actually changing to the in-
most and most contracted form; and in
September he suggested to me the Ty-
phoid fever, which in some places ex-
hibits a degree of malignancy equal
to that which has appeared in any of
our Atlantic cities.



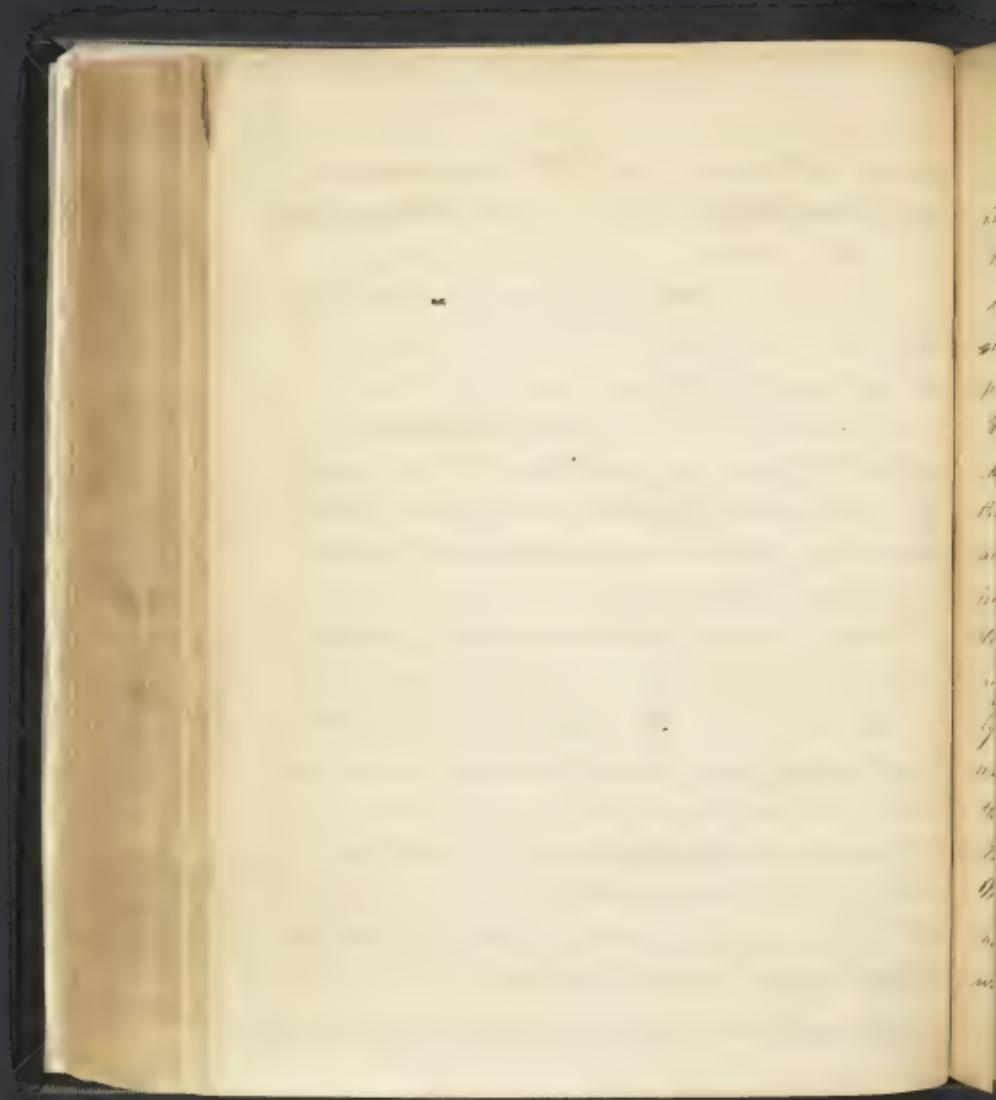
The temperature in October is more mild, a gentle breeze from the West, propitiates the afternoons pleasant and the evenings cool, but ^{there} alternate with warm days, and sudden showers of rain. About the middle of this month the temperature is reduced to the freezing point, which puts our agricultural state to the other continental regions, or changes them into an inflammatory character.

The month of November is characterized by that peculiar kind of weather called Indian summer. The atmosphere so thick that, on some days, that the sun is generally obscured, while the temperature is mild and agreeable. The autumnal diseases entirely disappear, the sun and sallow countenance, is exchanged for the full and rounded features, and finally December terminates with

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wearied Physician, and the comfortable
Patient, Health, Vigour and Flappiness.

This extensive country is inhabited
by People from all parts of the United States,
and many parts of Europe; Their diseases,
in all probability, are as some measure
influenced by the change of Climate to
which they are subjected on their arrival.
They are generally of a large and robust ap-
pearance, their constitutions strong and
vigorous. It is a disease of an active nature
which consequently their muscular systems
strongly mark'd. In country places and
small Villages they are much exposed
by sleeping in open Houses and unground
floors. In the larger Towns they have all
the necessary comparts of life, without
many of the luxuries of large Cities.
There is consequently less variety of disease
but of a more active nature.

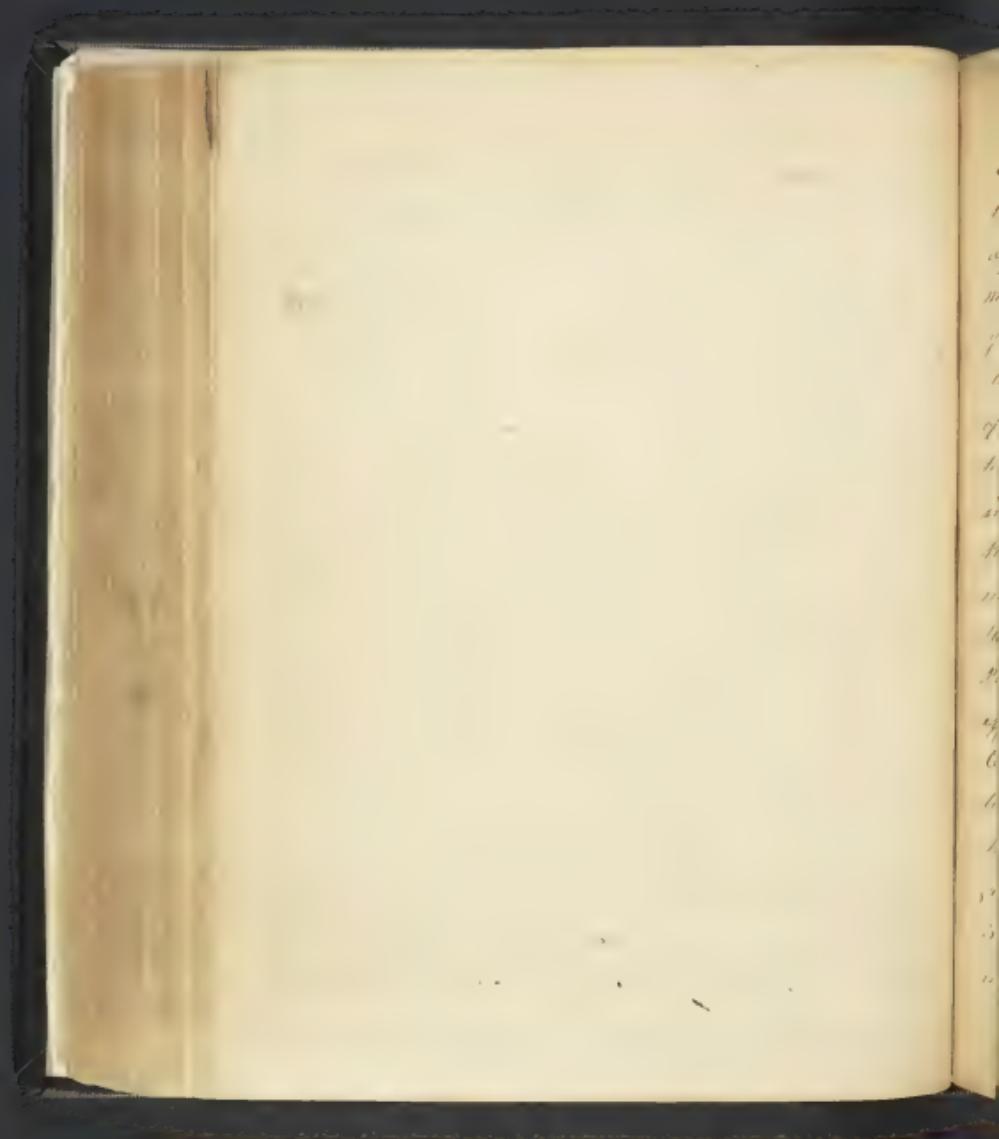


The mode of living among the Agriculturalists is generally simple, plain and good.

In the large Towns, they have every thing that a polite Country requires in proportion and number, with a sort of rapid improvement, care, practice.

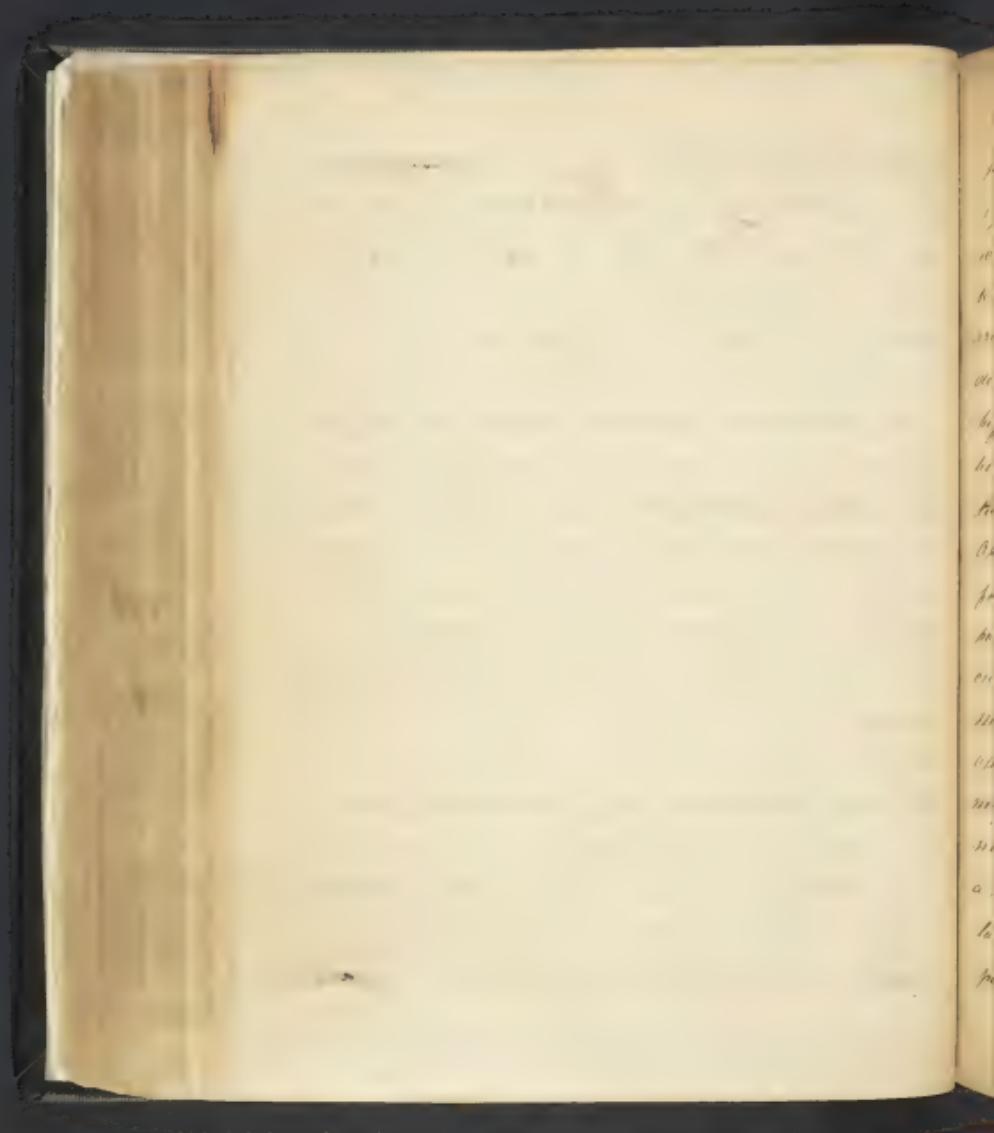
With extreme regret, I am obliged to acknowledge, that Spirituous liquors are the common articles of Drinck; they are among the staple commodities, and are used in great abundance. Their effects on the Human system are too well known to require an illustration. They undoubtedly act as a predisposing cause, to a large number of the cases of Bilious fever in the Western States.

In the months of March, April, and May, the diseases require but little variety of treatment different from that used in inflammatory complaints in



other parts of the Country, excepting that the debilitating remedies are carried to a greater extent. The Brain ^{and the} ~~are~~ Organs most generally affected at this season of the year. It may be the biliary organs are much deranged in their functions, and the power of the Stomach much impaired, for purgative medicines are used largely, and those in which calomel is an ingredient are the most valuable. As soon as the inflammatory stage of the disease ~~is~~ removed the Peruvian Medicines are used, & the Peruvian Bark is resorted to with good effect.

Cholera Infusoria seems to have few peculiarities, perhaps the only variation from the ordinary character is the greater degree of malignancy. The treatment is very various, and in many instances ^{extensive} unsuccessful. Some physicians of ~~affection~~



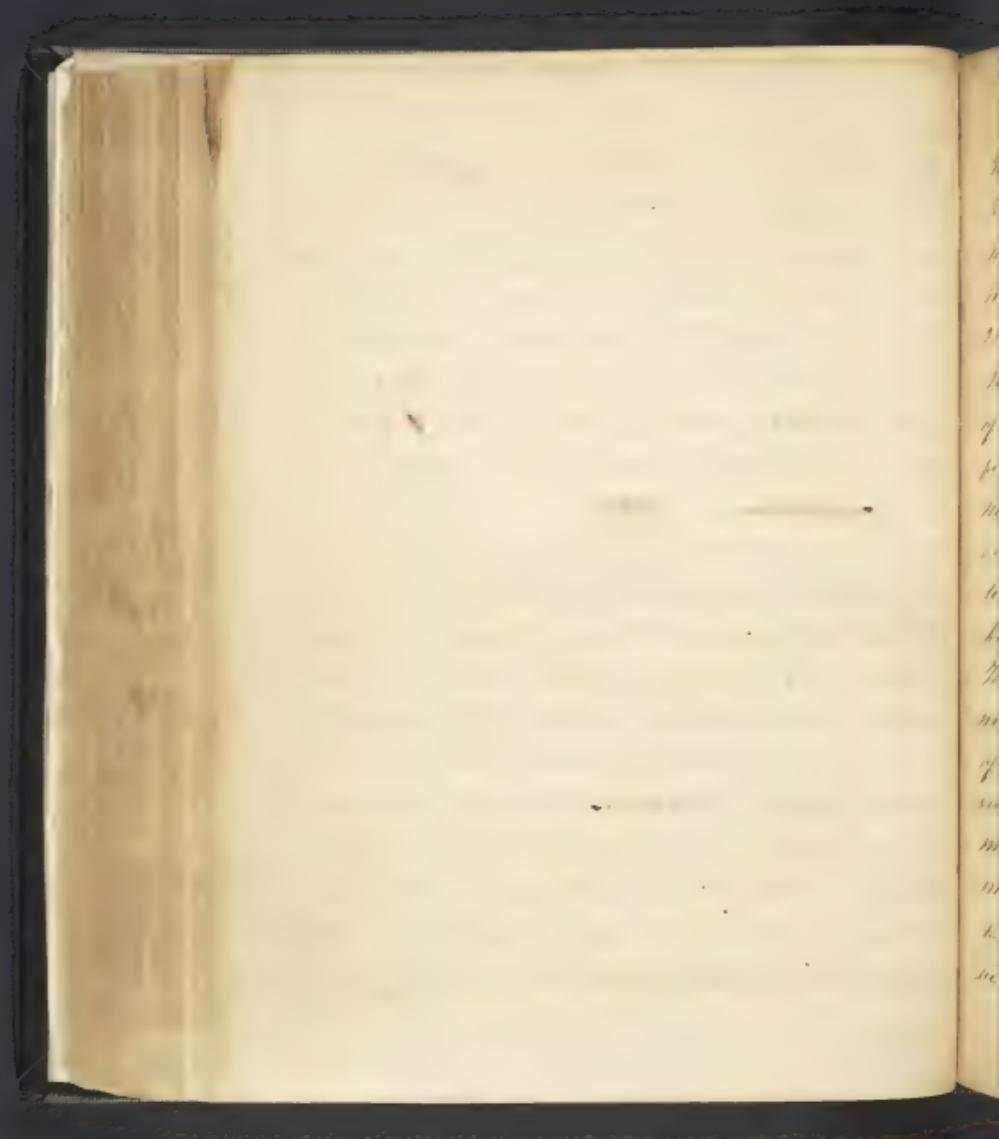
specie. depend entirely upon ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~int~~ ^{int}rigants. Others connect this with the warm bath, which determines the fluids to the surface of the body, and the adhesions are thereby relaxed. Many purge freely over the simplicies, but there is some materia medica matter in the simplicies which must be removed, while others are mild laxatives, and cathartics, such as, Calomel, Opium and Siccaceous, Horehound of the former, and one grain of each of the latter powdered and mixed, divided into six powder doses given every two hours. Perhaps if this method was alternated with the first, and assisted by the warm bath something might be gained. Cholera Morbus has nearly the same symptoms; runs through a similar course, and requires a similar variety of treatment, with that in other parts of the United States.

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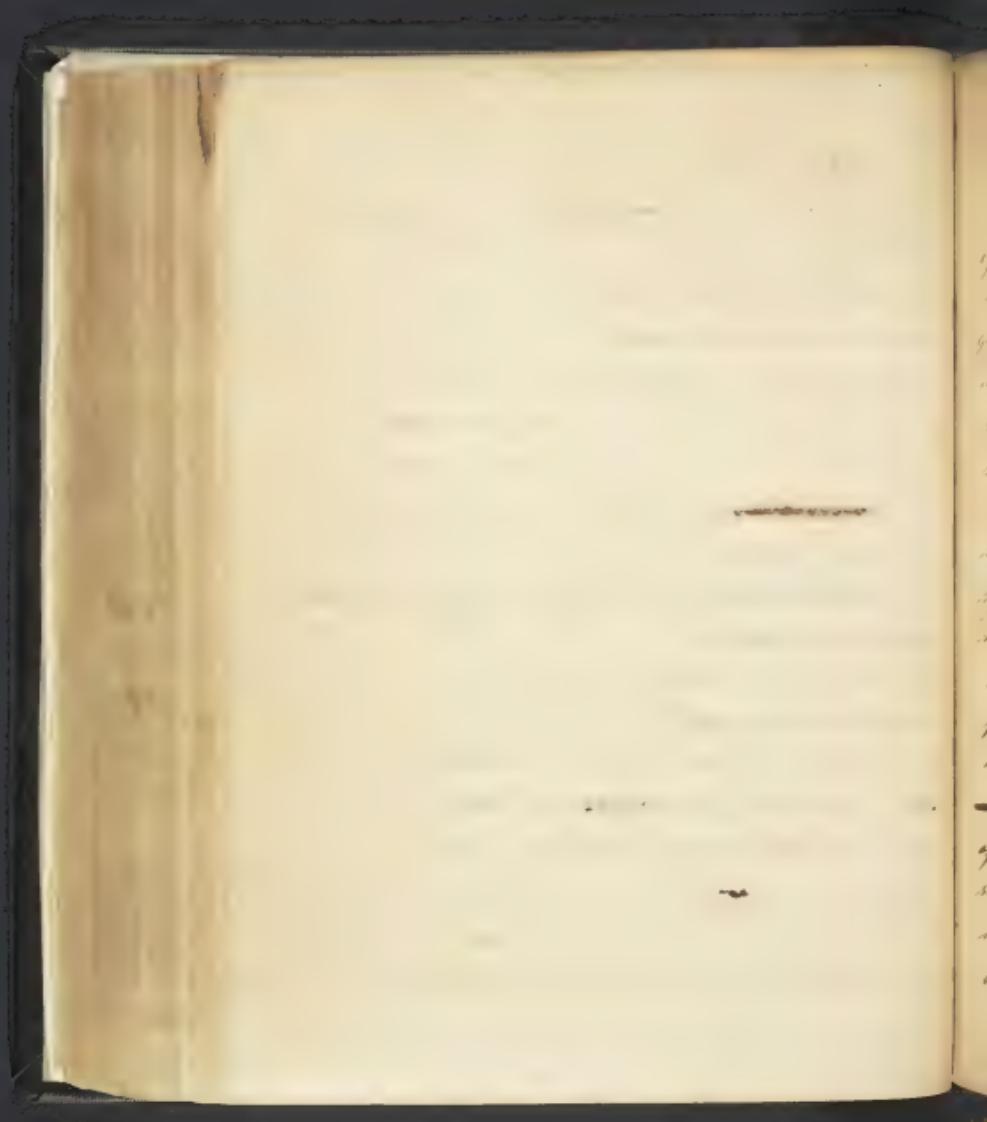
Asperity is characterized by a discharge of white, fleshy mucus mixed with Blood, great constipation, and inflammatory action, much deterioration to the lungs, liver and spleen, the function of the liver much deranged, pouring out bile in large quantities and of a vitiated quality. The general opinion is, that the great constipation is owing to the accretion of the bile, authors have a collection of hardened feces, these being seldom found in the discharge.

Blood letting in the early stages frequently produces happy effects, indeed it can seldom be dispensed with. The second indication is, to overcome the constipation of the Balsyle, which is often attended with much difficulty. Large doses of calomel sometimes combined with opium is the only medicine that in which much dependence can be placed.



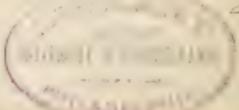
The third indication is to produce a de-
termination to the surface of the Body; the
most effective Medicine for this purpose, is
a combination of Calomel Opium and
Succussion, in small and frequently re-
peated doses. After the first excretion
of the bark, there remains but little diffi-
culty in keeping up the action by
mild ~~expulsive~~ purgatives, castor oil being
one well adapted to the purpose. This
lets to the Abdomen, frequently proves
highly serviceable.

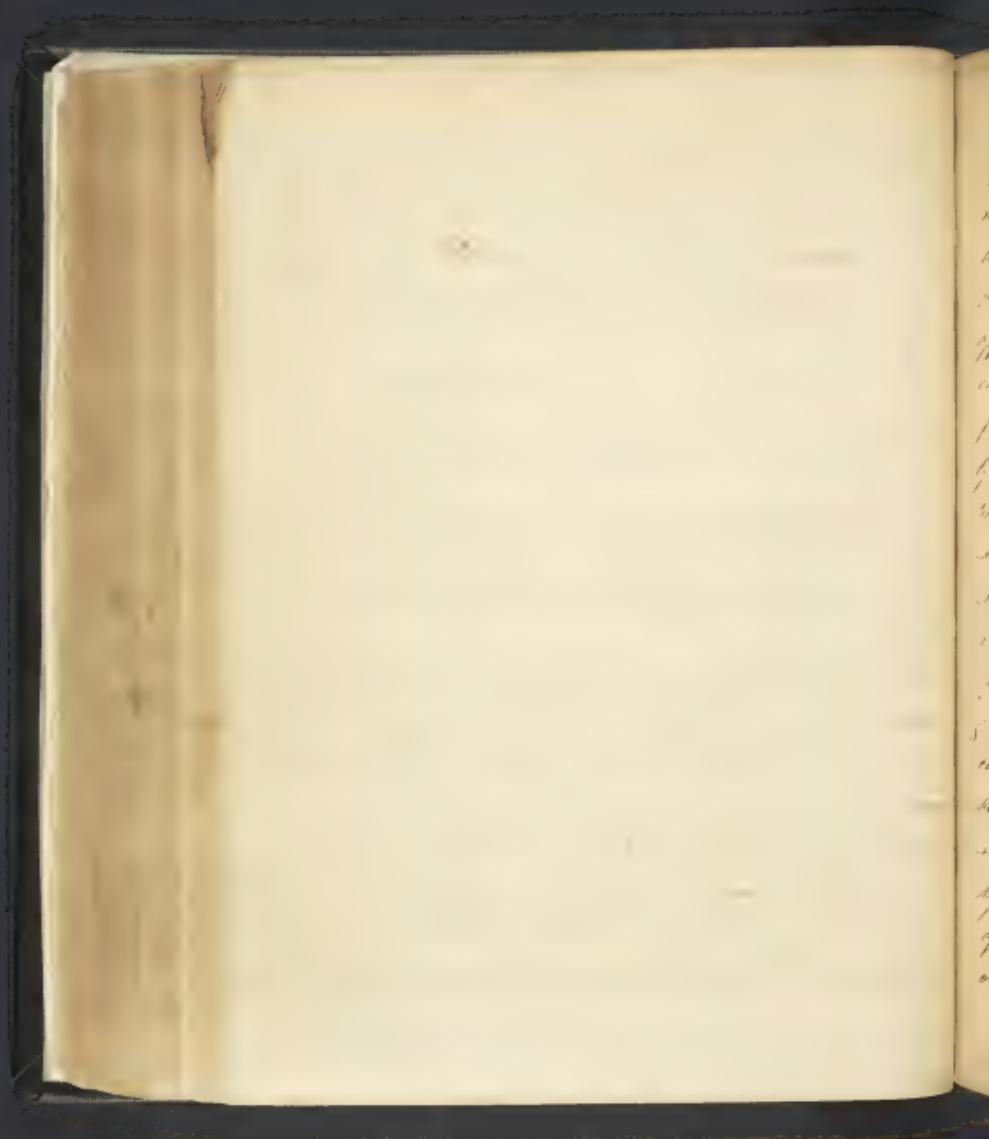
The bilious constitutional fevers are the
most common, & are the most important
of all the diseases of the West; they of-
fer all the varieties stated, from the
most mild Intermittents to the most
malignant Typhoid, and they all seem
to derive their influence from a
vitiated state of the Atmosphere.



will not be void of the intermittent fever, as it bears many of the same character in all parts of the United States. It usually visits nearly the whole of the country west of the Alleghany Mountains. There is in this disease a great tendency to visceral obstruction, purgative medicines are used largely, and the Peruvian Bark administered freely. The Intermittent fever neatly passes into a remittent, continued, and typhoid types, and there again into the tertian bout.

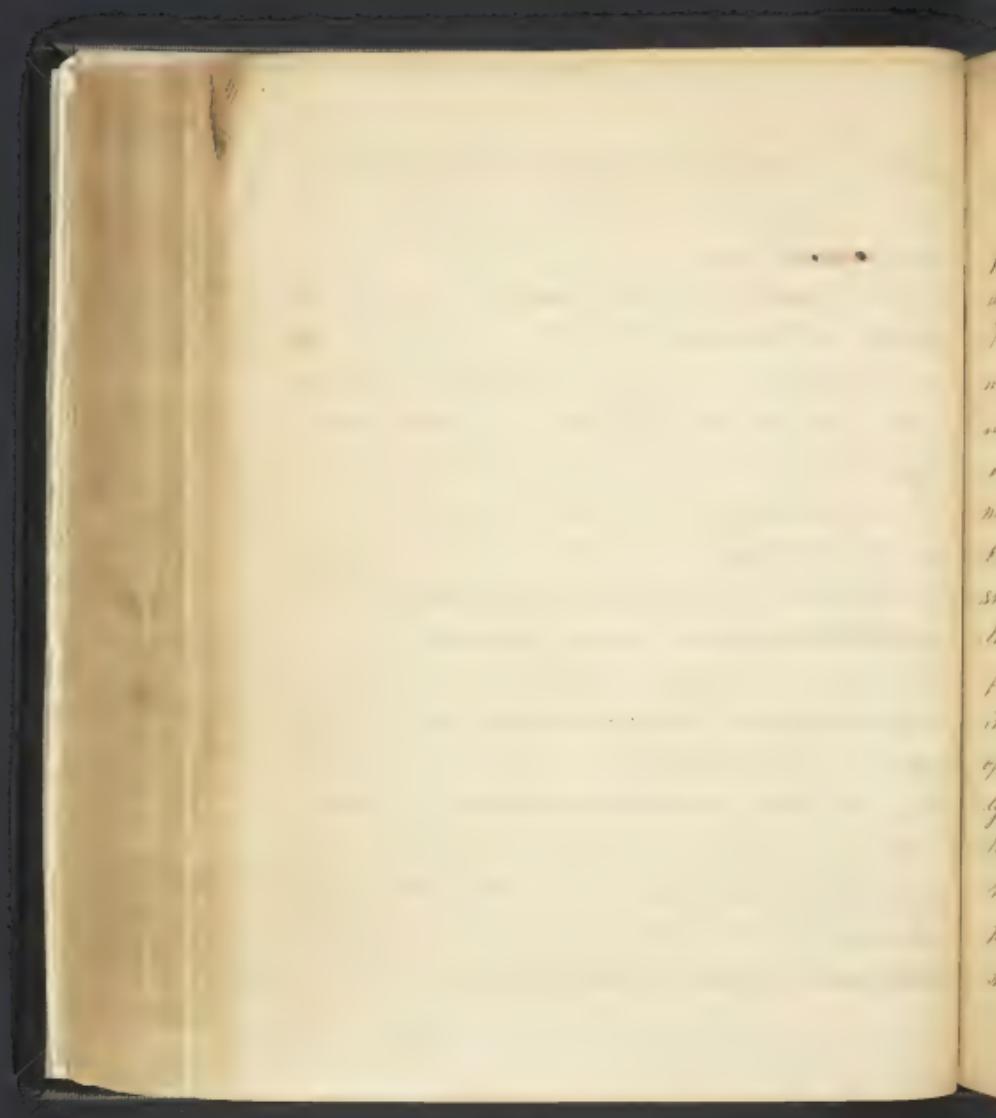
The symptoms of the tertian fevers frequently varies according to the humidity as the dryness of the atmosphere —, assuming an inflammatory nature, after frequent rains, but during dry seasons they have ^{it has} a strong tendency to fall into the typhoid state. It is usually attended with a full, slow, and strong



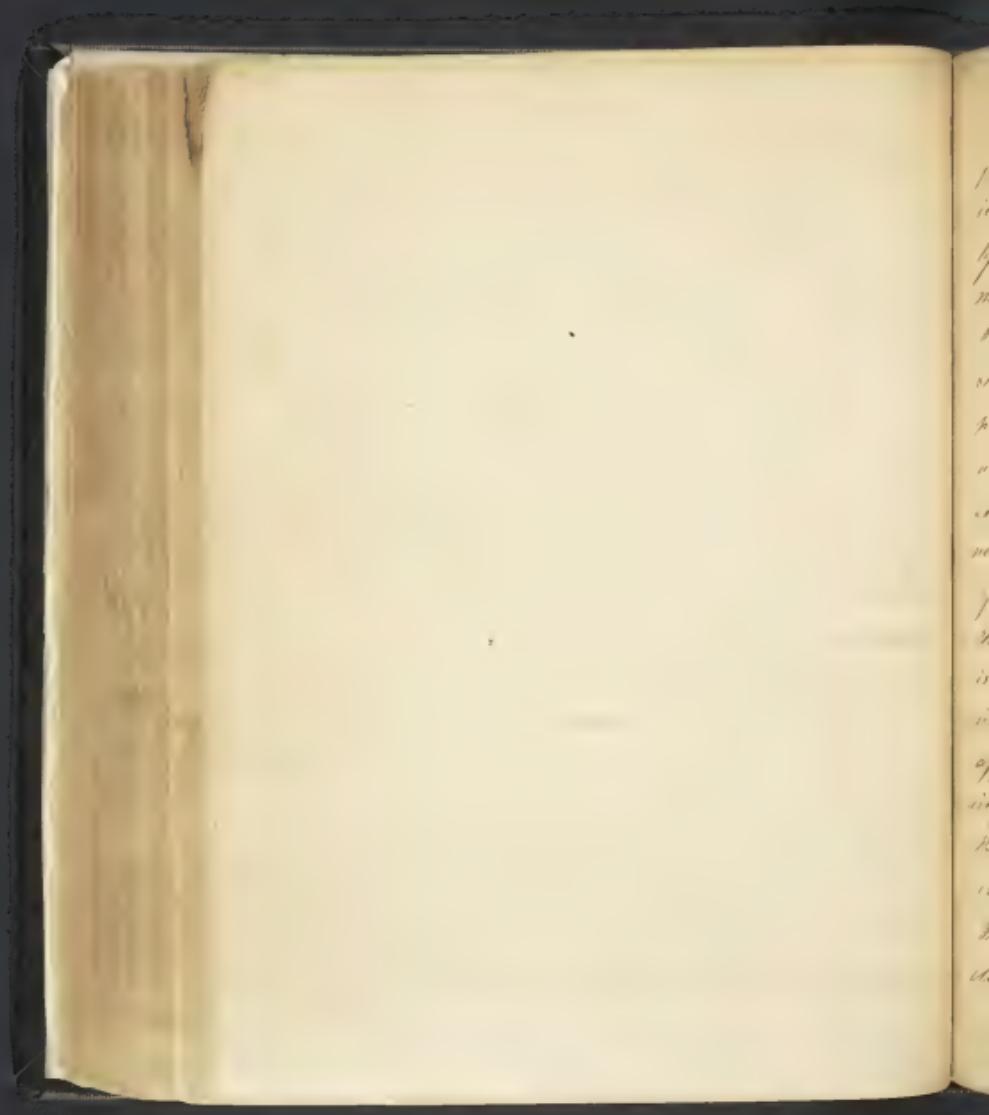


pulse, great thirst and flushed countenance, and, next deterioration to some internal organ organ, the Brain, the Liver, the spleen and the stomach with organs most affected. It seems to be the nature of the disease, that some one organ only shall be affected at a time; the Brain is most generally affected in the early part of the summer, the Liver and spleen in the autumn, and the lungs in the winter and spring. Sometimes a tendency to ^{inflammation} ~~congestion~~ continues throughout the winter season.

There is generally great costiveness, and a generally torpid throughout the alimentary canal. The stomach is generally very insensible, until the acrid contents shall be evacuated by an emetic; when a large quantity of bile and acid, mucus is discharged, after which it will generally receive the other medicines without offence.



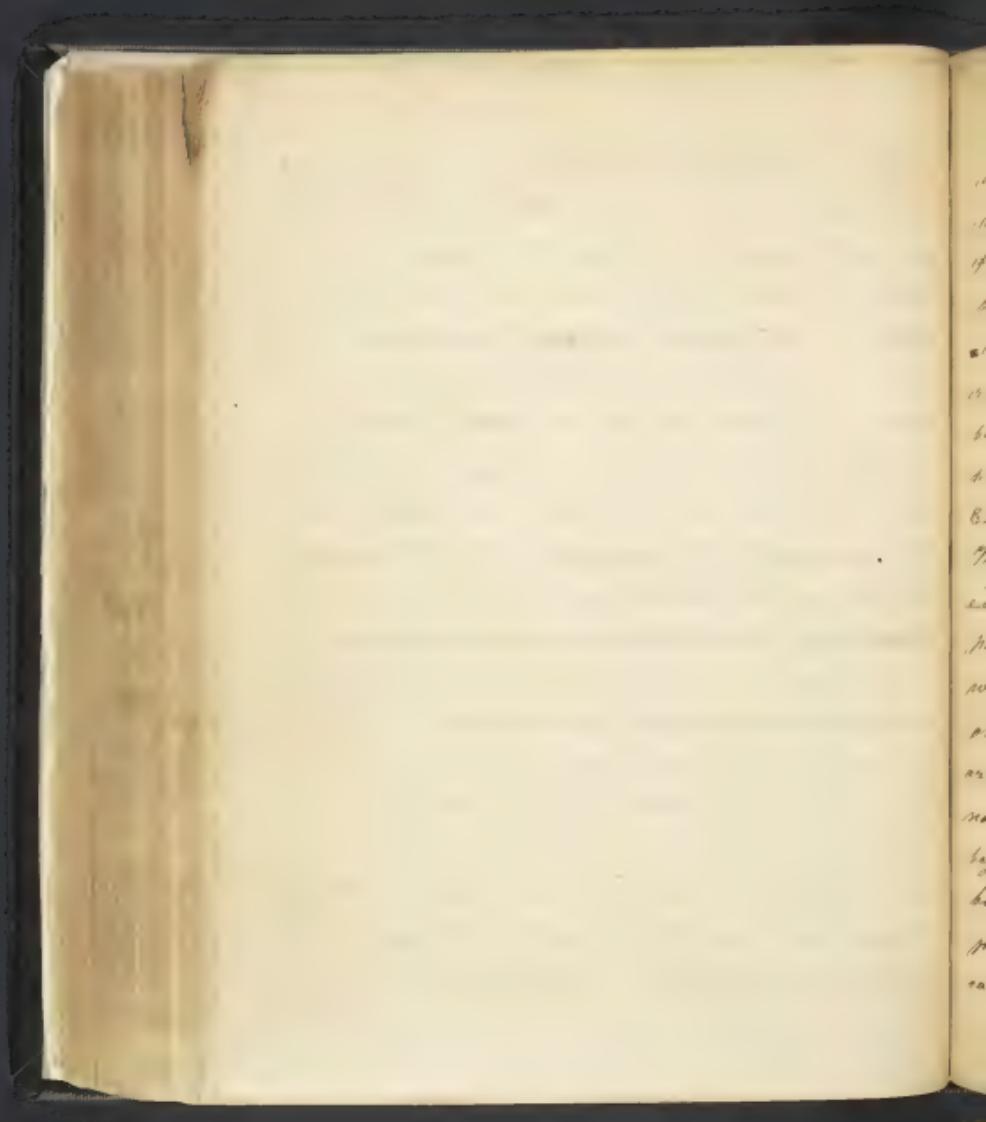
But such is the torpor of the bowels that very large doses of the most active medicines are frequently administered before they take any effect. This fact is attended with the usual symptoms which are observed in other parts of the country, and therefore unnecessary to repeat them here. The paroxysms pass through their usual stages, no mit and return, in the ordinary manner, but the whole course frequently is much shorter. This is the case in some other parts of the United States. If they usually terminate favourably or otherwise in five or six days, it sometimes terminates in phenixitis or ague, often on the fifth or eighth day, but it generally continues until the twentieth or fourteenth day from the first paroxysm. The indications in this disease are very plain, but the treatment is very various. Some practitioners use the lancet very



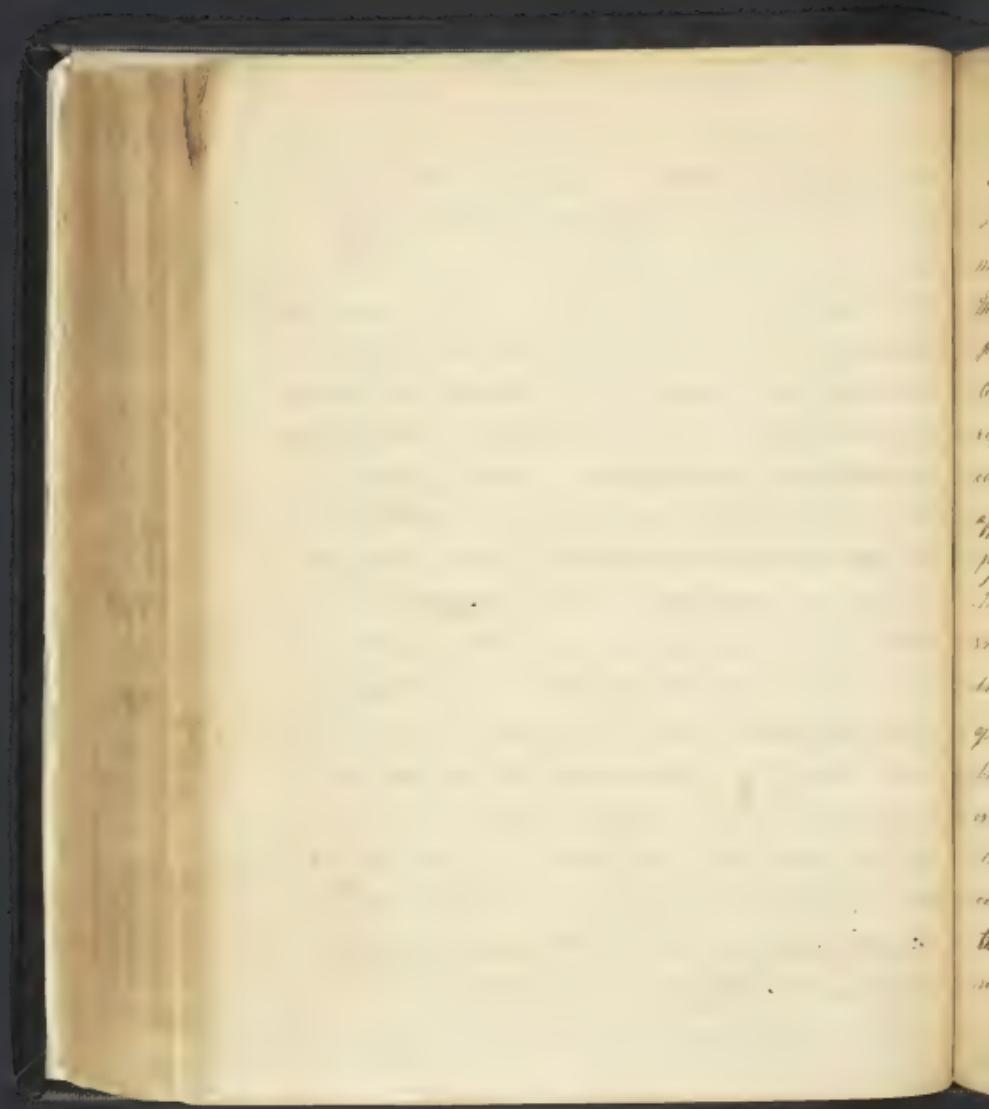
fully in the first stage, following it by small doses of cathartics, while others depend entirely upon them. Medicines will fit a disease to a mission is obtained, when the Peruvian Bark is administered with success;

Some use Tartarate of Antimony so as to produce full vomiting, while others use it only in small doses purgatively, without any effect. And there are not a few who always associate the name of bilious fever, with a profuse salivation. Mercury in this disease used as a cathartic is an invaluable medicine; and in some instances the system may need to be slightly affected, but a profuse discharge of saliva in general is injurious, and never expedites the cure.

A combination of these various principles I have seen happily adopted. The first indication is, to suppress all violent actions.



the older intestinal evigilators, nothing will do this more effectually than blackberry. The second indication is to evacuate the bowels. There is generally such an accumulation of this, as to render the stomach so irritable, that scarcely any medicine will be retained, and a sufficient length of time to make an impression on the system. Emetics are therefore strongly indicated. They often do much more than merely evacuate the stomach. They make a powerful impression on the system which prepares it for the reception of other medicines. The most active cathartics are now resorted to, a combination of calomel of Salap and gamboge mostly has an admirable effect, but it sometimes requires ^{be} repeated daily, until the alimentary canal is entirely evacuated.

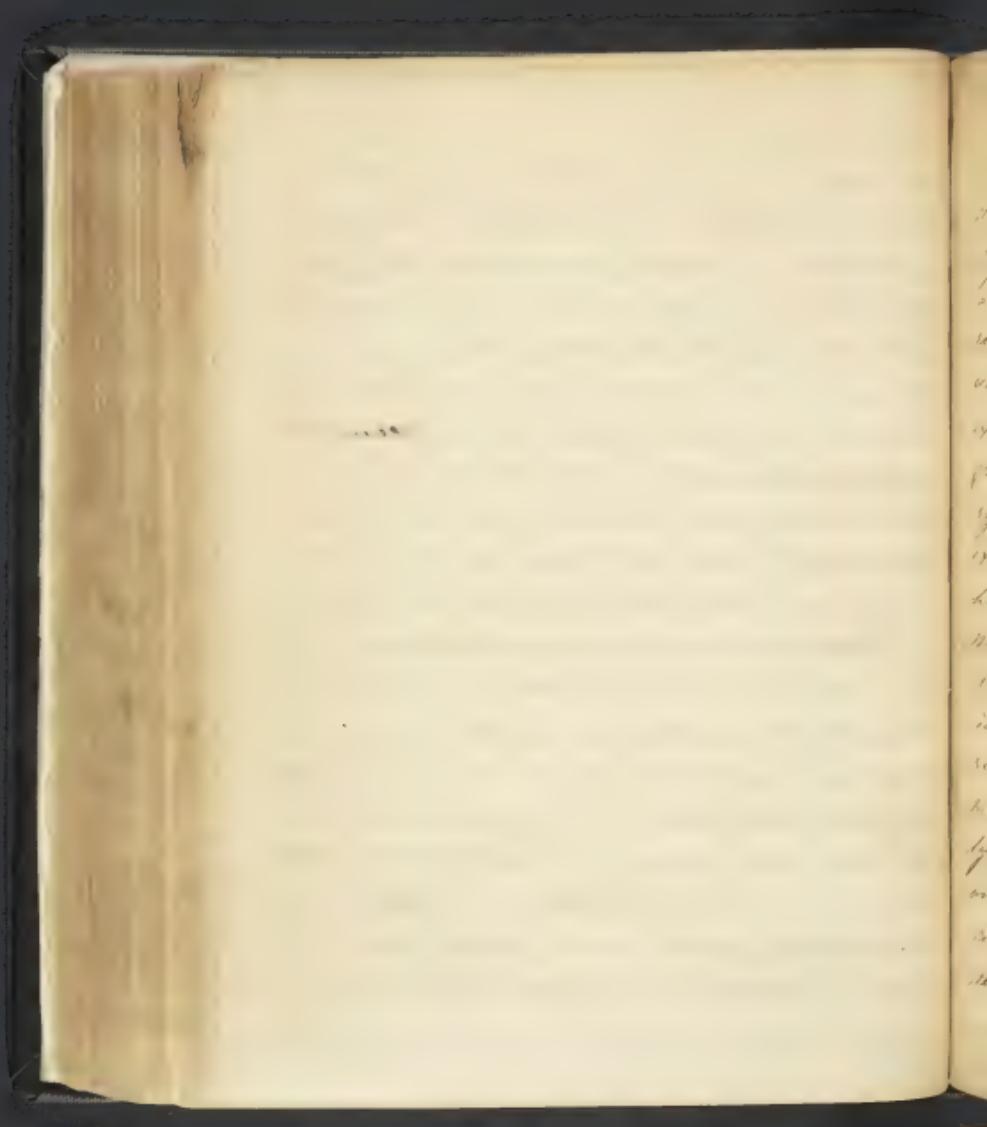


after which the fever abates and
a distinct remission is observable. The Bals. may be then administered with safety.

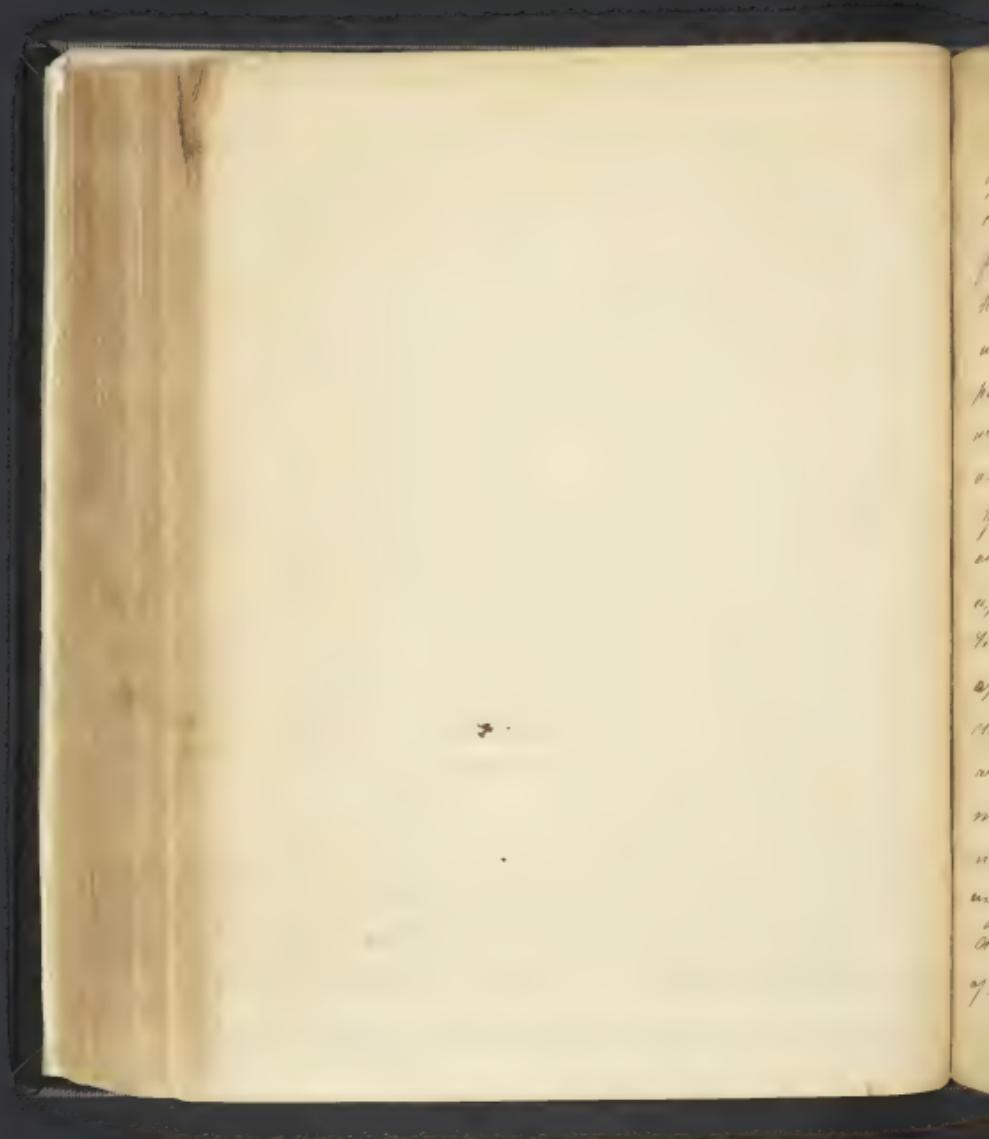
The warm bath is sometimes well presented, preparations, such as a tincture of wine, of common Calomel and Spices in small and frequently repeated doses, with Mercury's fumigations, continued until the Gums are slightly affected, frequently produce a most happy effect; the constipation is overcome, the fetid heat and thirst abating, the skin becoming soft and moist, and sometimes a distinct remission is the consequence. Calomel in some form is of unbounding utility in almost all the diseases of the West. As a purgative it is used largely with the most happy consequences, combined with diaphoretics, it is of the highest value, as a salagogue it is used for tetrahydro, it warms the patient

U

and seldom is necessary to the cure of bilious remittent fever. Partake of vomiting is used largely, and requires doubtless the quantity usually recommended in the Books to be produce full vomiting. During the paroxysm the antiseptical preparations have a powerful effect in alleviating the distress and anxiety. After the paroxysm has been once removed from the torpidity, the action is easily kept up by the milder purgatives, until a distinct resolution is obtained, when the Bark and other tonics are administered with propriety. A few days of this kind of treatment will generally bring the patient into a regular intermission or a continued state of convalescence. The prostrate or typhoid state of this fever seems to require a mode of treatment different from any

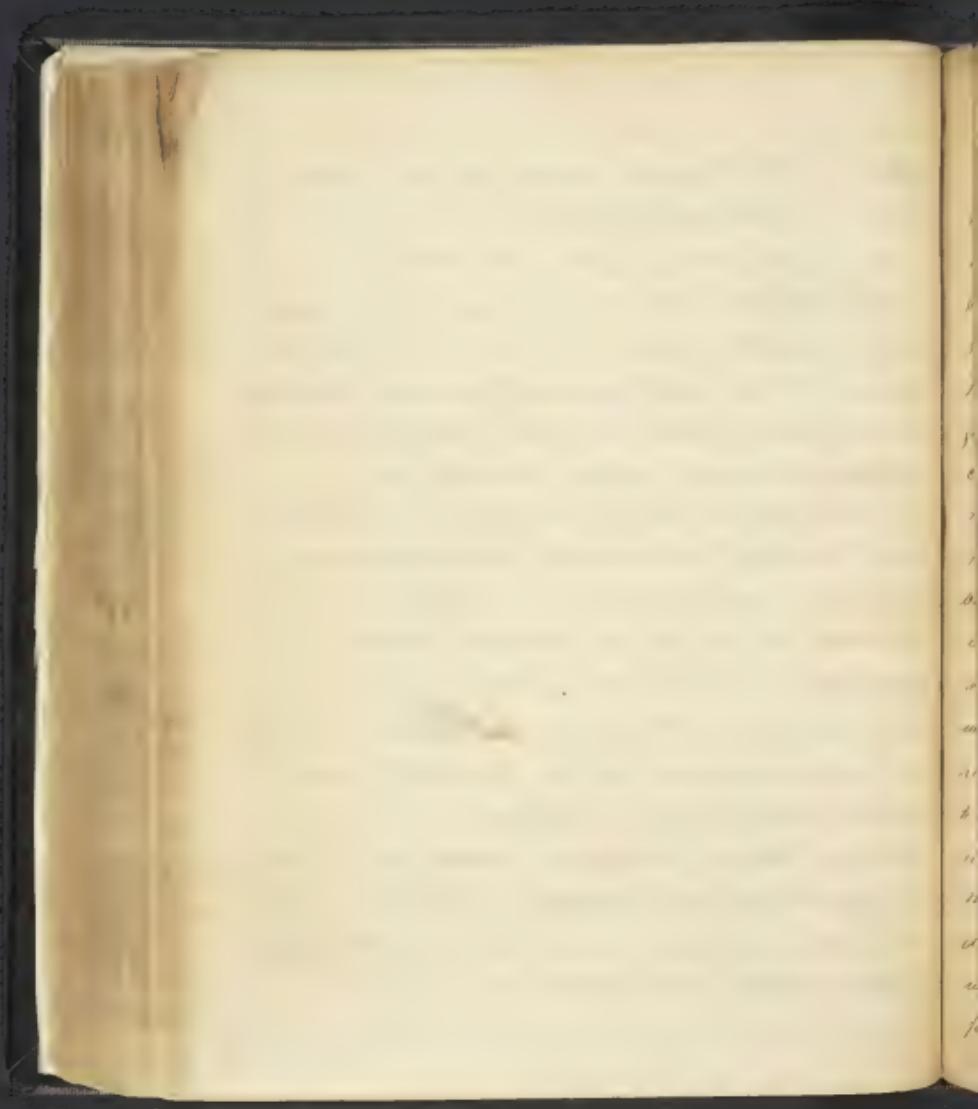


Not I have not seen it in books, but I do not know that it is peculiar to the Water country. This fever is frequently attended with a stuporous state of the system, the pulse small, hard and irregular or intermitting, as if labouring to relieve itself of a load. The extremities shiver and are cold. The throat great and the skin dry and hot, are main symptoms of intestinal con�ictions. The extremities generally confined to the Head, lungs or Liver. The Stomach and intestines most disregarded. The patient is either with fainting or convulsions, a convulsion is stupor, convulsion and death ends the scene. Where there is great determination to the lungs, Bloodletting is impious by hemorrhoids. Blister over the chest, and on the extremities are generally applied, and the Balsels are evacuated by a glyster. When the Brain has been affected



opening the regular vein, and the application of cold water to the heat has been found highly beneficial. Blisters applied to the extremities the body sponge'd with cold water and the poultice evacuated for micturition purp. These will generally relieve the most urgent symptoms when the bark and the other tonics are administered freely.

If the liver be the organ affected, a Blister over the part and on the epigastrium has been applied, and Calomel in large and repeated doses is found generally to relieve the apprehension. Blister the mucous membranes and the skin the ~~offensive~~ ^{stimulants} are given to keep up an evocable excitement and a dry irritation. The stimulating tonics, such as Wine, Brandy or any of the preparations of Alcohol; and Inhalations are used so soon as the state of the system will admit.



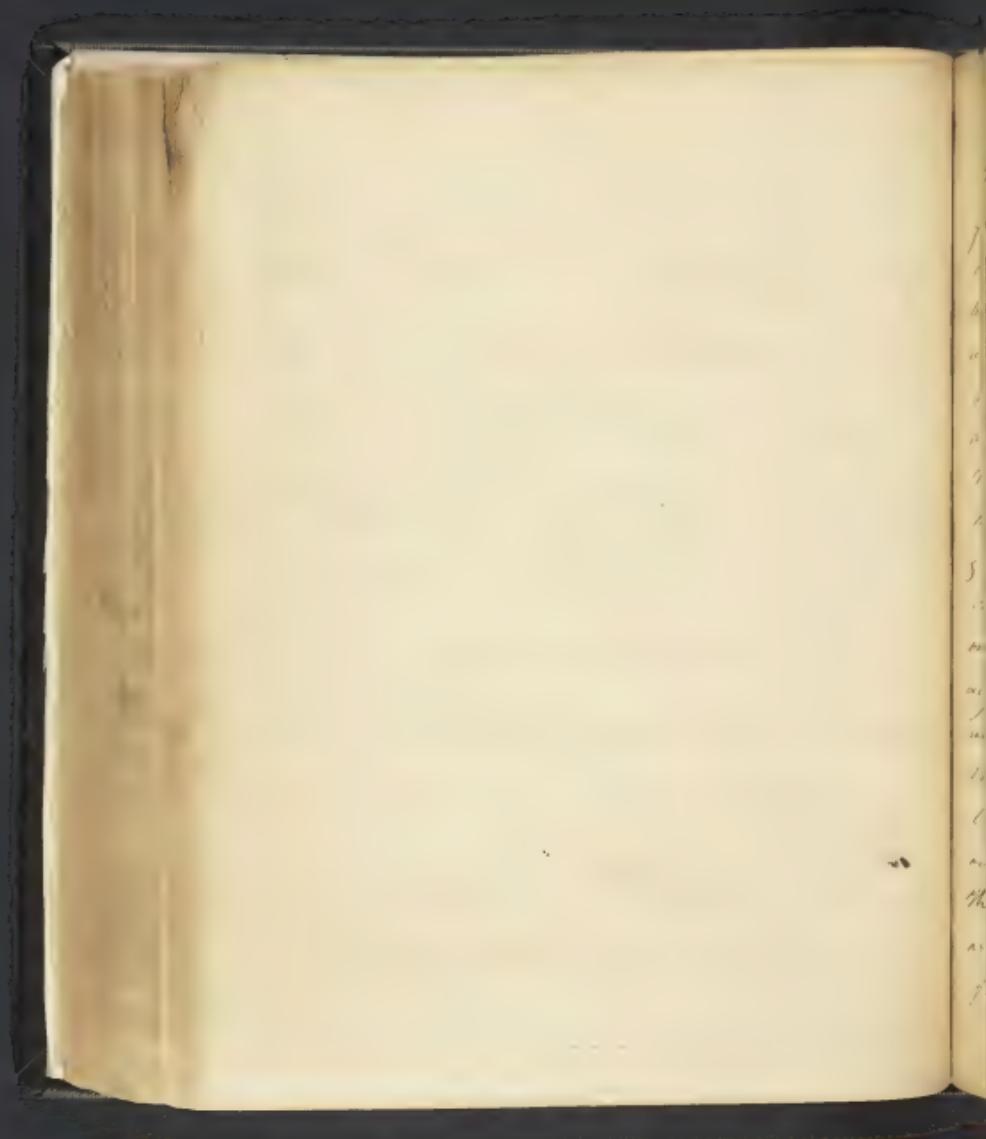
This state of fever is sometimes induced by
before use of sweating remedies or the
long delay of the Venice; In such cases the
usual practice is, to use the most powerful
strong ~~and~~ ^{and} violent Noxies, and at the same
time, keep the bowels open, by mild pur-
gatives, apply blisters to the extremities, and
etc, applications to the Head.

It now only remains for me to speak of the
Malignant, or malignant fever that occasionally
visits the larger towns, which are situated
on the borders of Rivers and adjacent to
some Marsh, or extensive low land;
which is frequently over flooded, by the
rise of the Rivers. They are of course exposed
to the, and all influences of the atmosphere; an
increase of humidity again to Marsh Noxie
mata. During the last summer, an Epi-
demic prevailed at Louisville Kentucky
where it was particularly extensive and
fatal.

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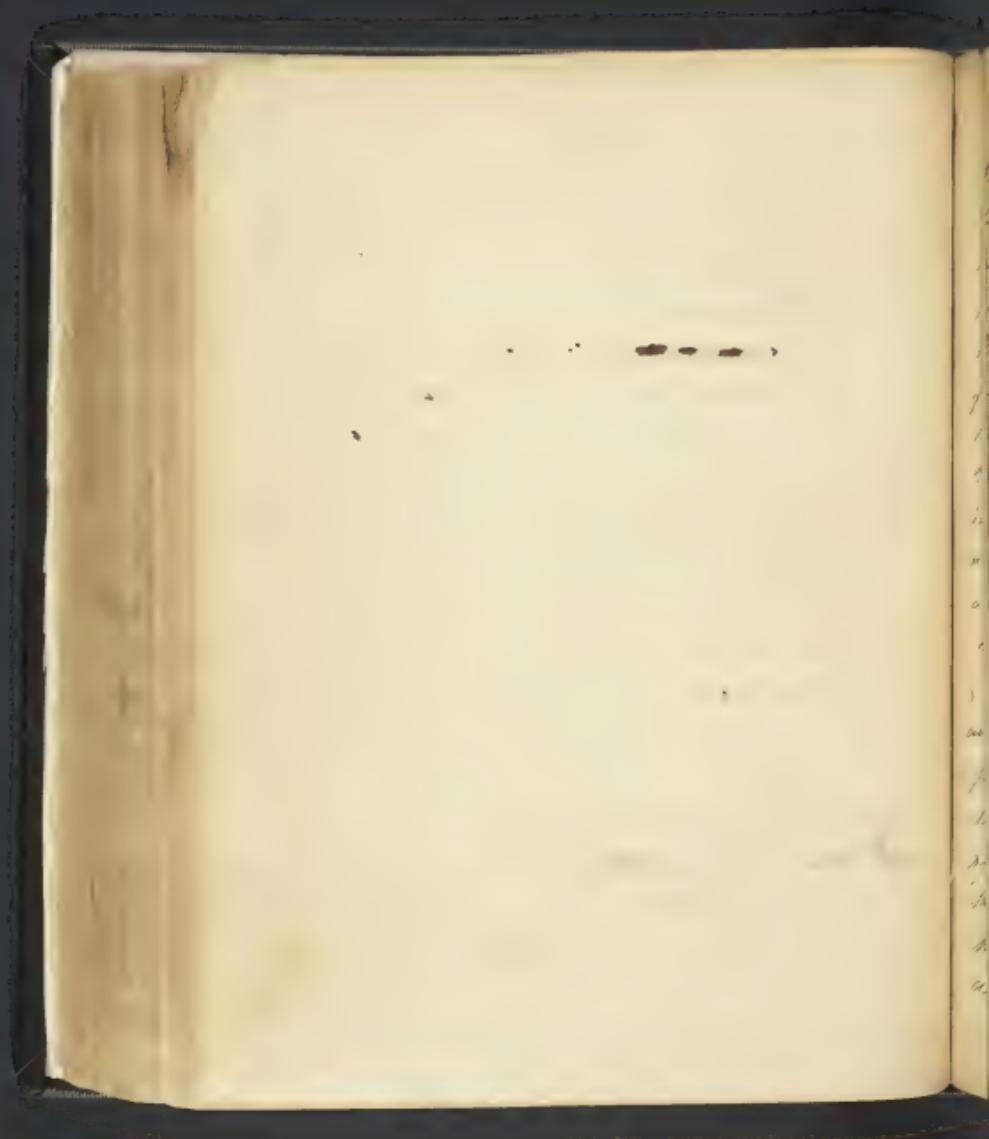
for a detailed account of which, I am indebted to Dr. Garrison a resident Physician of that place. Louisville is situated immediately by on the banks of the river, a small creek emptying into it below the town, about the ~~the~~ mouth of which much vegetable matter of all sorts collects. There is a portion of flat land filled with ponds of water in the early part of summer, extending several miles, the river continuing along its margin for a considerable distance.

"The fever" says Dr. Garrison "commenced in the last of June, but did not create much alarm until the last of July, when it became very generally prevailing in almost every family, and spreading its noxious influence twenty miles through the country, gradually losing its characteristic features and falling into the common bilious fever.



The patient in most cases, was in a state of great oppression. Muscular strength considerably and especially reduced. The pulse sometimes throbbing and irregular, at other small and hard; and frequently the vibrations or respirations, pulse was observed. The Liver and spleen engorged or distended with blood. The former secreting very little bile and that of an altered quality. There was usually great easiness of, and the stomach were irritable, few medicines could be retained on it a sufficient length of time to produce any good effect. The fever seldom remitted more than the fifth or sixth day, and ~~some~~ ^{some} times proved fatal on the eighth day.

A vomiting of dark, fleshy, matter occurs early in the place, after which, none recovered. The skin was seldom more yellow than in ordinary cases of bilious ~~fever~~ remittent fever.



It did not appear in any case to be contagious, but to depend on a peculiar state of the air atmosphere, which became perceptible in proportion to the distance from the Town.

From the ~~above~~ dissections it was found, that the liver and spleen were much distended with blood, and very easily saturated. The internal coat of the stomach in some instances, entirely destroyed, and the rectal and anal canal much inflamed; in such cases a quantity of dark, black, matter, had been excreted. The lungs and the brain generally mortified. The latter sometimes in an inflamed state, and the former much filled with pus. From the result of these examinations, as well as the symptoms, we must conclude, that the Stomach was the principal seat of the disease. The treatment of this disease was at first very various, but

after a time a regular practice was established and, usually proved successful.

In the first stage of the fever, but not after the ~~third~~ ^{first} day, blood-letting was found to produce an admirable effect. Emetics were generally injurious and sometimes fatal. Calomel seemed the only medicine that would lie in the stomach, or produce any good effect. Indeed it was the sovereign remedy. It was given, largely when ~~the~~ stomach would bear it, but the irritability of that organ was frequently so great, that small doses combined with opium only could be used. There were repeated cases, however, of a slight affection of the lungs, not perceptible, at this time, the bowels would pass away. The irritability of the stomach ^{was} to be reduced, and all the symptoms allayed. After the effects of the Mercury had passed the system, there was but little dif-

ficulty in keeping the bowels open by mild purgatives. Blistering was used on the extremities and Epigastrium with some benefit.

The most distinguished attribute of this fever was, that it would not bear the Bark in any shape, the most mild tonics only were admissible after a distinct remission. The patients generally recovered in about four or five weeks. But when removed from ~~within~~ the influence of the affected Atmosphere, they recovered much sooner. Rather more than two hundred fell victims to the Epidemic, in a population of about five thousand."

I have received accounts of the disease, as it prevailed in several other towns, all of which appear to be very similar to the above description, and therefore it will not be necessary to say much about them. The treatment in different places, being so various

that it seems difficult to ascertain the success of any particular mode of cure.

I think it will appear evident, from the above descriptions of the different diseases, that they depend on one common cause, this cause, varying only in degree, and modified by some peculiar circumstances.

They, moreover, attack the same parts of the body, running a similar course, requiring a similarity of treatment, and varying in exact proportion to the intensity of the disease.

One cause only is observable, and the disease increase in exact proportion as that cause is developed.

The South West winds evidently contain much miasmatic influence, spreading it over the whole country, producing bilious derangement, debilitating the digestive organs, and destroying the

ance of the system. The intense heat of the sun relaxing muscular fibres, and the cool and damp nights but preparing perspiration. Thus, the system is prepared to work under any augmentation of the cause, arising from low and damp situation as in the neighbourhood of Marshes; where unfortunately many of the principal towns are situated.

When the thick Dove-tail shall be removed
The product of agriculture properly
preserved. The Marshes drained; and the
Inhabitants abounding ^{more} ~~and~~ ^{more} ~~less~~ ^{less} per
ance. We may expect to find the cause
of the fever ~~removed~~. And when the science
— of Medicine becomes properly ap-
plied to practical purposes, we then may
expect to find the diseases of the West-
ern Country divested of half of their
Persons.

